'Beeja Yatra' by social activists

*89. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of 'Beeja Yatra' being undertaken by eminent social activists, to liberate Indian agriculture from the grip of foreign companies;

(b) the steps being taken to meet the demands raised in the Yatra; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Sir, Government is in receipt of a letter addressed to the Prime Minister regarding a Beeja Yatra reported to have been undertaken recently by a number of farmers' organizations. The letter has raised a number of issues like the cost of seeds, mono-cropping, high use of chemicals, changes in the laws relating to marketing of agricultural produce, agri-export zones, farmers' debt burden, Seeds Bill, 2004, Indo-US Knowledge initiatives etc.

(b) and (c) 80 to 85% seeds used by the farmers are farm saved seeds. Government is making all possible efforts to promote the quality of farm saved seeds under various crops and seed development schemes. Public sector seed producing agencies are also being assisted to produce and distribute quality seeds. Emphasis is on high yielding varieties and hybrids of the public sector to raise seed replacement rate and productivity. Government assistance is available only for certified seeds. Government is promoting Integrated Pest and Nutrient Management and organic farming to make crop production sustainable and cost effective. Crop diversification and inter cropping is also being promoted under Macro Management Scheme, ISOPOM, National Horticulture Mission, Agricultural Produce Marketing Regulation Acts are being amended to provide a wider choice to the farmer for marketing their produce. Agricultural export zones have been established to promote exports of crops for the benefit of the farmers. The Prime Minister's Relief Package for suicide prone farmers has specific provisions for addressing the problems of farmers' debt burden, and provide essential farm inputs at subsidized rates.